

**Maine Maritime Museum Library**

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**Inventory  
for  
Manuscript Collection  
MS - 5**

**Captain Charles John and Clarissa E. (Reed) Carter Papers  
1886-1915**

by  
Nathan R. Lipfert & Elisabeth Meier  
January 2018

Four boxes  
1.2 linear feet plus one oversize box  
*Accession #91.75, #97.132.4, and #2002.078.4.207*

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## Abstract

**Charles John Carter, Captain** (1845-1916)

**Clarissa E. (Reed) Carter** (1857-1951)

Papers, 1878 - 1915

3 boxes plus one oversize box (3 shelf feet)

Seafaring family from Woolwich, Maine

This collection documents Captain Charles J. Carter's seafaring career. The majority of the collection is made up of personal papers: letters between Charles Carter (1845-1916) and his wife Clarissa E. (Reed) Carter (1857-1951) and journals kept by Captain Carter. It also includes a logbook and several accounts related to the vessels *Hecla* (ship), *J.W. Marr* (ship), and *May V. Neville* (schooner).

Acquired in three parts: as a museum purchase, 1991; and as gifts from Dr. Charles E. Burden, 1997 and 2002

MS-5; Accessions #91.075, #97.132.4.43-45, #2002.078.4.207

Finding aid (folder level control) and related material in repository.

### Added Entries--people

Carter, Charles J., Captain (1845-1916)

Carter, Clarissa E. (Reed) (1857-1951)

Carter, Isabel Hopestill (1886-1976)

Carter, Worrall Reed, Admiral (1884-1975)

Cotton, Edward A., Captain

Goss, Guy C.

Kelley, John R.

Marr, John W.

Morse, George W., Captain

Reed, Samuel

### Added Entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)

*B.P. Cheney* (ship)

George W. Jones & Co.

*Hecla* (ship)

*J.W. Marr* (ship)

James E. Ward & Co.

James W. Elwell & Co.

*Lizzie Carter* (barkentine)

*May V. Neville* (four-mast schooner)

*Morgan City* (screw steamer)

New York & Cuba Mail Steamship Company

*Niagara* (screw steamer)

*Parthia* (ship)

*Saratoga* (screw steamer)

*Yucatan* (screw steamer)

### Added Entries—places

Woolwich, ME

Cuba

**Added Entries—key terms**

Accounts

Cape Horn trade

Carter Family

Coal trade

Coastwise shipping

Grain trade

Log-books

Merchant ships

Schooners

Ship captains

Ship captains' wives

Ships

Ships – Cabins

Ships – Owners

Steamboat lines

Sugar trade

West Indies trade

**Acquisition**

The letters were purchased from York (ME) dealer David Lowell in August 1991. He said that he had bought them from a New Hampshire dealer. Letters from Captain Charles J. Carter had been hole-punched and were in fourteen home-made ring binders; letters from Clarissa were in a manila folder.

The group of journals, scrapbook, log, accounts, and loose papers arrived in two gifts from Dr. Charles E. Burden in 1997 and 2002; he purchased them together at the Adm. Worrall Reed Carter auction, ca. 1997. Worrall Reed Carter was the son of Charles J. Carter.

**Related Material**

Researchers may also wish to examine MS-3, the Carter Family & Otis Family Papers, and MS-4, the Captain Edward L. Carter Papers, which pertain to Capt. Charles J. Carter's first cousin and other relatives. SM 49/5 is a log-book kept by Capt. Edward L. Carter on his final voyage in the *Parthia* (ship) in 1891.

Isabel Hopestill Carter's historical fiction, likely based on her childhood and the letters in this collection, may also be of interest. The library has her book *Shipmates* (1934) and several short stories (MS-54, box 2).

**Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

**Physical Condition**

The documents are all in relatively good condition. The ink has faded very little, the pencil is still legible. Some documents typed on onionskin paper are fragile, as is the binding on several of the volumes.

### Processing Note

The letters purchased from David Lowell (91.75) form Series I; the volumes and documents from Charles Burden (97.132.4.43-45 and 2002.078.4.207) form Series II. The two accession groups from Charles Burden have been integrated for clarity, but can be separated by accession number.

### Historical Note

Captain Charles John Carter was born in Woolwich, ME in 1845. His parents were Captain John Curtis Carter and Mary Stinson Carter. His uncle was Captain Charles W. Carter. He was the first cousin to Edward L. (1835-1891) and Christopher O. Carter (1836- 1915), also master mariners.

Charles J. Carter had a long and varied career at sea spanning fifty years. He worked for multiple owners and shipping lines, operating both sail and steam-powered vessels. His career was also far from linear, as he progressed variously from mate to captain to part-owner and back to mate again. Carter's commands included the *Storm King* (ship), *Lizzie Carter* (barkentine), *J.W. Marr* (ship), *Parthia* (ship), *Hecla* (ship), *May V. Neville* (4 masted schooner), and *Fanny C. Bowen* (4 masted schooner). He also served as mate aboard the *B.P. Cheney* (ship), *Belle of Bath* (ship), *Saratoga* (screw steamer), and in other vessels for the New York & Cuba Mail Steamship Company.

In 1884, Carter married Clarissa (Cassie) E. Reed (1857-1951), also of Woolwich. The couple sailed together for their honeymoon and occasionally thereafter. Ashore, Clarissa lived in Woolwich, East Oakland, CA, Baltimore County, MD, Bath, ME, and, finally, Yarmouth, ME. The couple had four children who survived to adulthood: Worrall, Isabel, Charles Frederick, and Marion. A fifth child, Guy Carleton Carter (1893-1894), died in infancy in Maryland and is buried there. Worrall R. Carter (1884-1975) attended the United States Naval Academy and retired as a rear admiral. Isabel Carter (1886 - 1976) went on to write a book called *Shipmates*, based partly on her parents' life together. The letters in this collection between John and Clarissa may have been used by daughter Isabel in the maritime fiction she wrote, as posited by Mary Anne Wallace in a paper she delivered at this museum's maritime history symposium in 1994, entitled "Isabel Hopestill Carter's Fiction: An Authentic View of Maritime Family Life."

In 1916, at age 71, Captain Charles J. Carter died in the wreck of the *Fanny C. Bowen*. Both he and the mate were reported killed by a shifting deck cargo of lumber; the crew all survived.

### Scope and Content

This collection is comprised of letters, journals, logbooks, accounts, and other ephemera related to Captain Charles J. Carter's seafaring career, covering the years between 1878 and 1915. Carter worked in multiple branches of maritime industry, including schooners running along the eastern seaboard to the Caribbean, ships in the California grain trade, and steamship lines to Cuba. His papers shed light both on individual trades and on the process of switching between maritime specialties.

Series 1 consists of letters sent from Charles to his wife, Clarissa, between 1886 and 1899, and from Clarissa to Charles between 1886 and 1887. The letters are long, detailed, and often written daily when the two were separated. They are chiefly personal, dealing with the

couple's close relationship, their children, domestic affairs, and friends and family. However, Charles's letters also contain lengthy accounts of his daily life at sea and in port. In recounting his dealings with brokers, ship owners, consigners, agents, and fellow captains, Carter provides a detailed, personal picture of Maine's maritime business networks. Letters written aboard ship include notes on crew, comments on cabin life, and a first-hand account of the loss of the *Parthia* (ship).

Series 2 consists of journals, logs, accounts, and ephemera written or saved by Captain Charles J. Carter. He was as prolific a diarist as he was a letter-writer, and his journals contain extensive accounts of his personal and professional life. One volume covers the years 1888 and 1890, when Carter was moving from sail to steam for the first time; six more, one of them a scrapbook, detail his time aboard the schooner *May V. Neville* from 1902 to 1915.

Series 2 also contains business papers related to Captain Charles Carter's commands. An account book and several loose accounts for *May V. Neville* complement Carter's journals for the same period. A logbook and accounts for the ships *J.W. Marr* and *Hecla* were written by other captains and apparently inherited by Carter when he took command of those vessels.

## Inventory, MS-5

### Container List

#### Series I: Letters between Charles J. Carter and Clarissa Reed Carter

##### Charles J. Carter to Clarissa Reed Carter

Box	Folder	
1	1	Letters, May 23, 1886-June 24, 1886
	2	Letters, June 25, 1886 - August 7, 1886
	3	Letters, August 11, 1886 - December 27, 1886
	4	Letters, February 25, 1887- September 27, 1887
	5	Letters, September 29, 1887 - February 28, 1888
	6	Letters, March 1, 1888 - March 16, 1888
	7	Letters, March 16, 1888 - March 31, 1888
	8	Letters, April 4, 1888 - May 2, 1888
	9	Letters, May 3, 1888 - June 1, 1888
	10	Letters, June 2, 1888 - June 27, 1888
	11	Letters, June 28, 1888 - July 22, 1888
	12	Letters, July 24, 1888 - August 16, 1888
	13	Letters, November 18, 1888 - December 9, 1888
	14	Letters, December 18, 1888 - December 30, 1888
	15	Letters, January 1, 1889 - January 20, 1889
	16	Letters, January 21, 1889 - February 20, 1889
	17	Letters, February 21, 1889 - July 22, 1889
	18	Letters, July 23, 1889 – January 6, 1890
	19	Letters, May 15, 1890 – February 13, 1892
	20	Letters, February 14, 1892 - March 25, 1892, <i>J.W. Marr</i> (ship)
2	1	Letters, March 26, 1892 - May 9, 1892, <i>J.W. Marr</i> (ship)
	2	Letters, May 16, 1892 - May 6, 1894, <i>J.W. Marr</i> (ship)
	3	Letters, April 24, 1894 - June 12, 1894, <i>J.W. Marr</i> (ship)
	4	Letters, June 12, 1894 - June 28, 1894, <i>J.W. Marr</i> (ship)
	5	Letters, June 5, 1895 - April 14, 1896, <i>Parthia</i> (ship)
	6	Letters, April 23, 1896 - July 14, 1896, <i>Hecla</i> (ship)
	7	Letters, May 25, 1897 - December 31, 1898 <i>Hecla</i> (ship)
	8	Letters, January 1, 1899 - February 12, 1899
	9	Letters, February 19, 1899 - March 28, 1899
	10	Letters, April 4, 1899 - June 24, 1899, <i>Yucatan</i> (screw steamer)
	11	Letters, June 25, 1899 - August 29, 1899, <i>Yucatan</i> (screw steamer), <i>Niagara</i> (screw steamer)
	12	Letters, September 5, 1899 - December 21, 1899, <i>Niagara</i> (screw steamer)

##### Clarissa Reed Carter to Charles J. Carter

13	Letters, May 20, 1886 - June 24, 1886
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- 14 Letters, June 24, 1886 - December 26, 1886
- 15 Letters, December 27, 1886 - December 4, 1887

## Series II: Journals, Accounts, Log, and Ephemera

Box	Folder	
3	1	Journal and scrapbook, Charles J. Carter, January 1, 1888 – April 17, 1890, <i>Saratoga</i> (screw steamer), <i>Morgan City</i> (screw steamer), <i>B.P. Cheney</i>
	2	Journal, Charles J. Carter, August 14, 1902 – December 3, 1903, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner)
	3	Journal, Charles J. Carter, April 13, 1905 – February 18, 1906, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner)
	4	Journals, Charles J. Carter, February 19, 1906 – June 6, 1906 and June 7, 1906 – June 15, 1907, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner)
	5	Journal and scrapbook, Charles J. Carter, March 22, 1908 – December 21, 1908, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner) (loose clippings in folder 8)
	6	Journal and account book, Charles J. Carter, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner), December 22, 1908 – August 26, 1915 (loose clippings and inclusions in folders 9 and 10)
	7	Account book, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner), 1902 to 1909
	8	Clippings and ephemera removed from journal and scrapbook, 1908 (folder 5)
	9	Clippings and ephemera removed from journal and account book, 1908-1915 (folder 6)
	10	Rimbaud, Aries & Co. account, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner), Martinique, June 1915. Removed from journal and account book, 1908-1915 (folder 6)
	11	Accounts, 1908, and list of owners, <i>May V. Neville</i> (four-mast schooner)
	12	Accounts, <i>Hecla</i> (ship), 1895-1897
	13	Map, "Railway Lines of the Cuba Company," 1898

### Oversize Box:

- 1 Logbook, *J.W. Marr* (ship), 1878 to 1879
- 2 Account Book, *J.W. Marr* (ship) and *Hecla* (ship), 1882 to 1897